

Measure



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John Peterson **College The Keeper**

The alarms shrieking,
students awaken.

Yawning, half sleeping,
sanity taken.

Taking a shower,
hot water burning.

Class in an hour,
ready for learning.

The classes begin,
data overload.

The knowledge within,
minds soon to explode.
Homework till midnight,
studying after.

No sleep is their plight,
school is their master.

Crawling into bed,
soon sleep they must spurn.

Like rising from dead,
the cycles return.

No path is steeper,
they strive for their goals.

College, the keeper,
collecting their souls.



Men & Women *Dan Zimmer*



The difference between men and women
Is in their underwear.
Not what is or isn't in their underwear.
The underwear themselves, silly.
(Although you may have a good argument.)
Women have laces and bows.
They have polka dots and stripes.
There's colors upon colors,
And shapes upon shapes.
Just look at the prices.
Only a woman would spend more for less.
As for men,
Well, let's say they're lucky if they're clean.





The Profound Experience of Skydiving

Brandon Bennett



It was six a.m. on the morning of Saturday, July 19, 2008. The alarm clock buzzed in my ear as I slowly crawled out of bed. I had only managed a few hours of sleep for the past few days, but it was my own fault. I had seen *The Dark Knight* at midnight on Thursday, and then proceeded to spend the day at Six Flags with a group of friends on Friday. Needless to say, I was exhausted, but Saturday's activity was the topper for the weekend: I was going skydiving.

Many people are afraid of heights; I love them. Being up high is exhilarating, provided I am safe, of course. I got this attitude from my maternal grandmother, who is a bit of a thrill seeker. She has been all around the world, and has been white water rafting over a dozen times. For her ninetieth birthday, she wanted to try skydiving, and asked if I wanted to go along now that I was eighteen. Now, most people might think twice about committing to jumping out of a plane. However, I had wanted to go skydiving for several years already. I gladly accepted her offer without hesitation.

It seemed as though the fates had aligned to grant me a weekend of pure excitement and adventure. Despite my fatigue, I was eager to be on the road, so I grabbed a quick breakfast of Pop-Tarts and got ready for the day. My brother Matt, who was now going skydiving for the second time, soon woke up and emerged from his room. My mother, of course, had to come along, and so we climbed into the car and went back to sleep as she began the drive to Chicago.

I woke up for the second time that day around eight and was confronted by a large building resembling an athletic field house. This was Skydive Chicago, the organization that allowed people as crazy as I was to jump out of planes. We met up with my cousin Katherine and our grandmother outside the complex and then headed inside. Grandma, Matt, and I registered at the front counter; my mother and Katherine were not jumping. After registering, we sat down to wait. Luckily, I had brought a book with me, as we had to wait a good hour and a half before being ushered into a small room to watch a training video.

We sat and waited with about fifty other people for the movie to begin. Some had





come alone, others in mobs. Everyone there, besides Matt, was jumping for the first time. Strangely enough, I was the youngest person present; most of the other jumpers were in their twenties or thirties. Our reason for coming, though, was the same: we were brave enough to jump out of a plane.

The training video began. I don't remember much about the movie, but I do know that the man giving the lesson had a beard that was at least two feet long. The video discussed common sense rules, such as when to pull the parachute, not to be afraid when about to jump, not to forget to pull the parachute, etc. Throughout the movie, I couldn't help but think how ridiculous the beard would look if he were to go skydiving with us.

We went back to the lobby to wait for a while longer. Different groups began leaving at intervals, but we were not quite sure when we were up. My mother bought us all lunch as time went on. Eventually, noon rolled around, and we were finally told to proceed to the hangar. There, we met with our individual instructors/partners for the jump.

Everyone who goes skydiving is required to make their first two jumps in tandem, which meant being with a professional skydiving instructor. After those jumps, a person has the option of taking several more training courses, and can then be allowed to do single jumps. Six solo jumpers were in our group, as well as about ten tandem jumpers, so we had a wide variety. The solo jumpers mentioned how many times they had gone before; they had all gone at least thirty times. Skydiving is not the cheapest activity, so I wondered how anyone could afford to go more than a few times in a lifetime.

As we all pulled on our fluorescent skydiving jumpsuits, my personal cameraman introduced himself. My mother, who had paid for me to jump, had also paid for a cameraman to jump with us and film our descent. Finally, we were finished preparing, and I joined the rest of my group outside, waiting to board the plane. Several of the other jumpers were beginning to grow nervous, but my grandmother was as excited as I was. She had actually planned on going the year before with my brother, but couldn't due to a broken ankle. She would have gone anyway, but the company would not have allowed it.





Our cameraman filmed my instructor and me as we strode toward the plane. It felt like a scene from a movie when the astronauts walk in slow motion to the space shuttle. Staff and people who had just come in from their jump cheered us onward. The only thing missing was fireworks and Bruce Willis. We boarded the plane and sat in the line with the other tandem jumpers. When the entire group was on board, the plane took off down the runway.

The instructors sat behind each tandem jumper. We were all given a personal altimeter to wear on our wrists, so that we could track our ascent. My instructor began strapping multiple harnesses around us, so that neither of us could slip. He went over the basics that we had covered in the video while my cameraman took several shots of the altimeter as the plane rose.

Finally, the plane leveled out at eleven thousand feet. Nervous and excited chatter filled the air. Suddenly, the door was opened, and the cabin became much windier. The solo jumpers lined up in single file and stepped out into the open sky one at a time. Next, the tandem jumpers started forward slowly, as we had all been strapped to our instructors. Three pairs stood before me and each pair jumped. My grandma and my brother were in line behind me.

My instructor and I stepped up to the door. Wind rushed past as he took hold of the bar at the top of the doorframe. I was in front. I was basically hanging in the air, connected only to my instructor. It was a little unnerving, considering we were about to jump out of a plane that was eleven thousand feet in the air. He asked if I was ready and I gave him a thumbs-up. Before I knew what was happening, he pushed off from the plane.

Time seemed to stand still for that split second before gravity took over. I saw the world with such astounding clarity, like a vast quilt laid out before me. When people say standing next to the ocean makes them feel small, they should try skydiving; it will make them feel completely insignificant. This is the only way to truly appreciate Earth's beauty.





We did a complete front flip as we fell away from the plane, and then leveled out, looking down toward the ground. I had not even noticed my cameraman jump but he was there with us in an instant. Several times during the free fall we grabbed hands, causing us to spin.

I kept checking my altimeter, making sure we had not gone too far. When we reached six thousand feet, I reached back and pulled the parachute. Our descent slowed sharply and my cameraman went shooting past us. This part of the trip was moderately unpleasant, unfortunately, as the parachute really tugged on certain parts of the body not meant to be tugged on. However, it did provide a chance to take in the scenery. The fields below were divided into sections, just like we see on old Saturday cartoons. Nonetheless, it was breathtakingly magnificent.

In the sky, nothing really matters except what is happening right now. All the problems that people have, the wars and recessions, mean nothing when viewing the world from above. Words cannot truly express the wonder and majesty of the experience.

I was taken out of my reverie when we began to near the ground. We were coming in rather quickly, so we kicked up our legs and slid for about ten feet before stopping completely. My instructor quickly and efficiently unhooked us, and the cameraman approached me to get the final word on the experience. My mind was a little locked up at the moment, though, and so I mumbled something about it being awesome. Honestly, I could not think of a way to fully sum up the experience and what it meant to me. It was a thrilling experience and had a profound effect on me; it really made me realize that I need to live life to its fullest and that every day can be an adventure. After all, we only live once; might as well enjoy it.







Ginger Snow **Ginger Midnight**

Yellow skies close above
She was walking alone,
Feeling the soft summer rain.
She reached out her arm to touch the moon.
Blue midnight as the cat slept and
snow capped mountains reached the sky
as she walked on below.

Patricia Varona **In Love**

Sometimes I cry at night
because you're not here to hold me tight.
Sometimes I hold it in 'cause they've told me falling in love is a sin.
Sometimes I look at the sky
and begin to wonder why
I'm so far away
and how I wish I could just stay
in your arms,
free from all the harm.
Sometimes I look at the moon
and start to think about how soon
I'll see your face.
I'm sitting here counting the days.



Two Little Miracles *Anna Rohaly*



The heart monitor's alarm sounded, waking Barbara Heffernan. It was time to say goodbye.

Twelve years before, Barbara had been sitting on the couch relaxing, her pregnant belly swollen because of the twins she carried, her ankles, also swollen, elevated on the coffee table in front of her.

Barb was seven months into the pregnancy and everything seemed alright. The only sign that anything might be amiss came within her third month, when Barb had started bleeding lightly. Two previous miscarriages told her and her doctors that this was not a good sign and she was put on bed rest. After that small warning, the pregnancy appeared to be going fine. Nothing seemed wrong.

While Barb was sitting on the couch, however, her water broke. Only being in her seventh month, it didn't dawn on her at first what had happened.

"At first I thought I had wet my pants, and I was like, 'Man, I wasn't even laughin!'"

Half way to the bathroom, though, she realized what was happening. She sent her three-year-old son Mike to get his daddy, Skip, from his work room. It was time to go to the hospital.

Barb was rushed down to IU Med Center in Indianapolis while Skip found someone to take care of Mike. He then drove an hour drive from the Heffernan household in Kokomo to join her.

Barb was terrified, but the nurse that rode down with her talked to her the entire time, telling her that if the babies were born there was no better place to be than the IU Med Center because it was connected to Riley Hospital for Children.

The doctors at IU Med Center decided to try to stop the labor. There was enough of the water left surrounding the twins to sustain them for a week so plan was to give them that week to develop as much as they possibly could before they were born.

The doctor's plan didn't work.

The drugs Barb was given to stop the labor made her very loopy and while she felt no pain she did feel the head of her baby as he began to slide through. She coherent enough to know something was wrong and Skip ran out of the room to grab the doctors. While he was gone, John Heffernan dropped out of his mother onto the bed.





"I looked down, and I was pretty loopy. The only thing I thought was, 'Huh, he's a boy?'"

The nurse who first responded to Skip's alarm saw John and immediately went into emergency mode. She scooped the baby off of the bed and the next thing Barb knew was that the lights were flashing "like in the movies" as she was being wheeled down the hall. Emergency surgery was needed if the second child was going to survive.

"I don't know what happened, but Keith was in trouble," said Barb, "They had told Skip he could stay and then all of the sudden they grabbed him and told him he needed to leave now. To this day I still don't know what happened."

Skip was told that the entire emergency surgery would take roughly 45 minutes. It was now a little after two in the morning. He sat down and waited. He kept waiting but no one came. By three he decided that the second child must have died and that they had forgotten to send someone to come tell him.

Finally, at around five, someone came. In their hurry to open Barb up to rescue the child, they had accidentally nicked her bladder. Though the nick had led to complications that had lengthened the surgery, both Barb and baby Keith were fine.

Barb was wheeled out of surgery and the nurse woke her up from the anesthetic. While she was conscious, they rolled the Isolettes carrying the twins past her bed, opening the small doors enough to let her put her hand in and touch their tiny fingers. That was the last she saw of her two baby boys for 24 hours.

Both twins only weighed about two pounds. Such tiny babies, they were not out of harm's way yet. Five weeks after they were born, one of the nurses in the Newborn Intensive Care Unit noticed that something did not seem right with John. Immediately, blood tests and cultivation tests were given. The results were not good.

John had a rare fungal infection running sepsis through his tiny body. "I asked the doctors to be honest with me and give me a percentage. They told me it was a five percent chance that he would live." Even now, 15 years later, the tension and stress of that moment comes through in Barb's voice.

John was given Anpha Teraphim, a powerful drug that has been known to cause severe liver damage, kidney failure, and in some cases death in adults. John was still only about two pounds and the drug was more likely to kill him than heal him. This drug was his five percent chance.





two pounds and the drug was more likely to kill him than heal him. This drug was his five percent chance.

The drug succeeded in curing John from the sepsis fungus, and though he survived it came with a price. John's nerve endings in his ears were severely damaged, rendering him permanently deaf, but still very much alive.

"He is actually not supposed to be here," Barb said, "A doctor admitted to us, 'if you don't believe in something bigger than yourself, you should now.'"

John was not the only baby to have problems. Keith spent ten months at Riley's but had a short break from the hospital, spending ten days at home. On the tenth day, however, Keith went into respiratory failure.

Riley's "ICU on wheels" as Barb calls it, came from Indianapolis to pick up Keith. The ambulance, normally staffed by only three people, came with six staff members. Two respiratory therapists, a nurse, a nurse practitioner, and a doctor all came along because they knew the Heffernan family and they knew Keith.

"It was kinda' like a reunion," Barb said. "They all came right across the room, gave us hugs, and said, 'we'll take care of your baby.'"

After Keith got to Riley's, Barb and Skip were given two options. Either they could give Keith a trach and put him on a permanent ventilator or they could let him die. Barb and Skip chose the ventilator. They knew his life would not be a long one, but they also knew that he should still be given the opportunity to enjoy life. A few months later, he was able to go home.

The twins grew fast. John was deaf, and because he was unable to hear, he grew up in a beautiful little world of his own. He noticed and pointed out beauty in pure, childish ways. He showed everyone he met that every day life is miraculous in simplistic ways that are over looked.

"John just takes simplistic things and makes them the coolest thing in the world," Barb said, "I have really gotten to live that saying about seeing life through the eyes of a child. It has made me appreciate all the little things that most people don't even think about. The other day we came out of church and he turned and said to me, 'Ma see the bush? It's yellow!'" Barb laughed at the beautiful simplicity of her fifteen-year-old son's amazement and observation.

Keith was special in a different way. While he was unable to walk, see, or speak,





none of these disabilities could cloud his smile or his laughter. If something struck Keith as funny, he would laugh.

One thing Barb remembers that made him laugh was feeling rain splash down on his legs. They sat him mostly under a poncho in his wheelchair, only his legs poking out, laughing and laughing. He was a ray of sunshine who touched everyone.

While Keith could not stop people to point out a flower or a bush, he showed the entire family how precious walking and speaking and seeing could be. He too made everyone stop and feel grateful.

"I so wish people could see our lives from our perspective," said Barb, "I don't take hugging my children for granted anymore. I look at everything as a little miracle. There are little things in front of us every single day, like your child coming home and saying 'I love you.' That's a gift!"

When the twins were ten, however, Barb's motherly intuition started to prickle. Though she didn't say anything at first, deep down she knew that Keith's time to die was coming.

Two years later, in November of 2005, the doctors informed Skip and Barb that Keith's body was getting tired. He had smiled through the last twelve years but the time was coming to say goodbye.

Skip and Barb had to tell Mike and John their brother was dying. Mike had become a very protective and loving older brother. The news cut deep. He was also the family member who decided that Keith should be able to die at home instead of in the hospital. John took the news in such a matter-of-fact manner that they wondered if he really understood the reality of the situation at hand.

Skip and Barb decided that those last holidays Keith shared with them needed to be special. They decided that they would share them at home with just the five of them. His brothers, along with Skip and Barb, would need those memories later to help them cope with his death.

The time came all too quickly. On Holy Saturday, the day before Easter, the heart monitor sounded just before 4:00 a.m. Keith had been in a coma for that last few days so they had known it was coming. Still, the sound of the alarm was heart wrenching. Barb woke Skip and went to wake the boys. Together, they entered Keith's little room. The pale blue walls, covered in clouds, and covered with shelves holding stuffed animals





and Winnie the Pooh bears had been his home for twelve years. They knew that was about to change.

Mike, John, Barb, and Skip all surrounded Keith's bed. Waiting for their turn, each one leaned down and gave him one last kiss. Barb sat next to his bed, holding his hand and the tears began to flow. At exactly 4:00 am. Keith passed away.

Barb: "The journey was worth it. One thing I want to make very, very, very clear is that the journey was not an easy one. It was very much worth it, but it was not easy. My philosophy is that God never promised us a rose garden. I found this saying that really helped me. It's something like, 'It is your attitude at the beginning of the journey more than anything else that will determine its outcome.' I used to hold onto that because it's very true. Life is all about choice."

The Heffernans made the choice to love their children with everything they had in them. They have never been disappointed in that choice. To this day, they still miss their son and brother, but through faith and loving support from friends they will continue to live and continue to love.









Daniel Zimmer **Meeting Grandpa for the First Time**

The young 21 year old closed his eyes and smelled the fresh ocean air as the waves crashed against the giant rocky cliffs while he stood right at the edge. It may have been one of the most dangerous things he could have ever done. The breeze blew lightly at his back pushing him gently. His toes hung over the edge. He would never be as close to his family, even traveling alone through Ireland from Dublin all the way across the nation to the green, lush west coast. He closed his eyes, took the longest gasp of air his lungs could inhale to take it all in. Then he turned his back on the ocean and stepped away from the ledge that could have lead him to a free fall of 214 meters and tugged hard on his manly insides to not let tear drops form in the corners of his eyes.

The 21 year old, was me. Granted, I had heard stories about my family and its strong heritage. There had been many drunken nights with my family. A cold drink would be in someone's hand as they started, whether it be my aunt, my uncle, my mother, heck it could have been one of my cousins. Then the same words started us off as we wore a worn path of memories farther into the ground: "Remember when."

The stories were amazing. They made me so proud to be who I was. The heart and care, the generosity and passion that carried the heroes in them were so well crafted and created. The story would end in tears and laughs. We all loved them. The subject of the stories were the foundation, the rock that held our family together and had us grounded with our faith and traditions. They were about my grandparents.

It was last night at the pub in the small village of Dunn that really made the trip. I had opened the door to the locals' gathering and meeting grounds and felt all the eyes staring at me. It was not the first time I had them on me, all the small towns knew when there was an outsider among them. I had had these looks following me all day. I ignored them and like all pub standards, I went right up to the bar and ordered my first drink. I stress the first because it was not going to be my last. I grabbed my beer and turned to find a table to sit at. It had been a long day of traveling from point to point. I had been on shuttle buses and airplanes for far too long.

Just then, I was bumped into and almost spilled my beer as I tried to exit to my safe haven in the quiet corner of the pub. I turned to not catch a glimpse of the man who made me almost spill my beer but in all honesty to catch my beer from falling out. It was not just one man at the bar but was actually a group of men, old men. They had weathered some storms as the Irish would say. Their beards were long and thick and





the wrinkles on their face reflected the hard working attitude that they made a living off of in the western part of the green country.

I assumed the worst. I thought they may have been looking for a fight, but none of them made a move. It was just how it had been when I first opened the door to the pub to let myself in. They just started. The longer the bold eyed men stared the more their faces grew pale. It was as if they had seen a ghost. I turned to look over my shoulder thinking maybe something was going on behind me that was gruesome and would explain my awkward situation. I turned, nothing. Just more people staring at me with the same ghost stricken faces.

As I started to make paces towards my chosen seat one of the elders grabbed my arm with caution, afraid I might strike him with case of the famine. "You're...You're," he said struggling to spit his thoughts out or make sense of them, "You're back. You! Patrick Murphy! I'm-We're- You're- Lads, we're seeing ghosts."

Patrick Murphy was the name of my grandfather. My mouth started dropping to the floor. These men knew of him. They knew who he was. I did not know where to begin.

I never had a chance to be held by my grandfather. He has been one of the strongest influences in my life and I have never seen him in person. I never knew the scent he left behind in the family room, saw him smile at his own jokes, or hear the hearty joyous welcome when someone new came to the party but I heard all the stories about him. He was the glue that held a large family together after settling on the outskirts of New York City in New Jersey to do what every immigrant came to America to do; to make a better life for him and his wife. He was a charming man who made people comfortable and happy with who they were. From the stories on late nights with family relatives he was always the man that people wanted to see first and last at the party.

I never got a chance to meet either of my grandparents. Their lives had been cut short the same week I came into the world. I was born on August 13, 1989. The accident where they were hit head on by an intoxicated driver happened August 10, 1989. I was to be their first grandchild. My birth was a second place story to the loss in the family.

I was quickly viewed as the second coming as my grandfather, especially as I





grew up. I took on the same looks and voice as my grandfather. I have been said to have the same fiery passion and commitment as him. Even our hobbies have similarities. We both enjoy writing and playing soccer at high levels.

I assumed I was being mistaken for my grandfather or the ghost of my grandfather. The elder gentlemen kept assuring me that I was a ghost. "No, no. I'm not Patrick Murphy, that was my Granddad. I'm his grandson."

After I gave my explanation the bar grew silent, everyone looked back and forth at each other debating if my excuse was believable enough to pass as acceptable. It felt like a courtroom just before the jury gives its opinion. One of the elders sitting next to the one who had grabbed me by my jacket sleeve whispered something into the elder who had grabbed me. He smiled and nodded by to his companion. "Well," he started as he was about to give verdict. Silence filled the room smothering me and making me feel compact and small. "Looks like you'll be needin' 'nother bloody beer now then won't ya laddy?"

Like the cheers of a standing ovation, the pub went back to normalcy with banter filling the air along with beer glasses clinking together. The bartender resumed taking orders. The elderly group of men who had bumped into me earlier quickly pulled up a bar stool for me and helped me take my jacket off. "Aye, you'll be sittin' n' fittlin' with us for awhile bhoy. You'll better wanna listen."

I did not imagine that chasing my ancestry would have taken me this far. I sat there deep into the night hearing some of the same stories I had heard from my family back in the States, but I heard so many new ones. With each gentle introduction to old neighbors and family friends of my grandparents I grew closer to each one of these lovely people. The loving actions of each one of these people confirmed to me why my grandfather was as loving as he was in his amazing life.

"No worries, young bhoy. Hey was a grand ol' man. One of the proudest throughout this cuntry, n' everyone here could smell it on yea too," One told me after slamming another pint of a dark stout in front of me, as I just finished my last one.

"He's the best mate I coulda ever assed for. You're the splittin' image of 'em. Congradulations, you hit the gold'n heart lott'ry. The people you lef' back 'ome mus' love ya," said another.





One person would shout and chime in at random, yelling high praises about the man we all loved. He's was so many different things to so many different people. He was someone to talk to for many. He was an advice giver to the farmers. He helped others when financial troubles hit. He helped birth one of the women's children because she would not make it to the hospital in time. He gave two men rides to the docks each morning so they would not be late for work.

Most of all Patrick Murphy was a lover. So many of the women loved telling the stories of how my grandfather and grandmother met, or the stories of how my grandfather would have to take the East coast city girl, my grandmother, and help her adjust to slower life in the West. He would bring her flowers during the growing seasons and always made sure they were a different kind. "This girl will always d'serve some sorta flower of a diff 'rent color. Cus' she has shown me tru colors I'd nev'r seen befor," said a woman, doing the best imitation of my grandfather I had ever seen.

My grandparents met like every Irish couple begins their walk down the path called love, during the summer months. After the English had annexed Ireland and made the people speak English, Gaelic, the Irish language became of little importance, especially in the bigger eastern coastline cities like Dublin, where my grandmother was from. To not lose their traditional language families from places like Dublin would send their children west for the summer. They paid the poorer families to take their children in for three months and this was a way to make a little bit of extra income for the farming families. It was like being immersed in the language completely. If any children were caught speaking English three times then they were sent home. It was similar to a summer camp where the boys and girls would all ride their bikes down into the beach and relax in the warm sun. There were dances and all sorts of social events for them. It was one of these dances where Patrick Murphy met his future wife, Mary. From then on they never left each other's side and Patrick showed her all up and down the countryside.

This love my grandfather was able to give back to the world was why I stood on top of the Cliffs of Mhor last spring. It is why I walked for miles and miles along the edge where ocean met hard shale and crashed up white foam so far below me. It is why I walked with the wind at my back, hearing the voice of my grandparents accept each other's hands in marriage. It was here where Patrick Murphy, my hero whom I am most





proud of, proposed to my grandmother. It was why I existed today.

The whole town the night before my adventure to the cliffs had my Grandfather's proposal speech memorized. The wonderful man I met, who was my grandfather's best friend growing up told me it word by word. "He lov'd her don't yea know?" he said in the pub last night after 12 rounds of Guinness. "He took her out to those cliffs, and he told her, 'Mary, u've been such a pain in my heart from the first time I let me eyes meet yours. Every night, when I close me eyes, I 'urt. I ache. At the tip o' the mornin' I take my first sips o' me tea 'n it still 'urts. All 'cause ah you. You're uh beautiful wom'n an' 'n even more beautiful soul. You built me up jus' like these cliffs 'ere. 'Nd I'm ah scared man cause I'd never been one 'fore n is only jus' a matt'r 'o time til we won' be on this earth ata same time. Mary, I'll need ya in this life n' the next.' Then 'e got on a knee bhoy, 'n 'e gave her the Irish weddin' propos'l," he said. Then he made a sign of the cross three times like he was starting a prayer and taught the wedding proposal I too will someday use.

"By the power that Christ brought from heaven, mayst thou lov' me. As the sun follow' its course, mayst thou follow me. As light to the eye, as bread to the hungry, as joy to the heart, may thy presence be with me, oh one that Move, 'til death comes to part us asunder."

As I stood on the cliffs I felt the corner of my eyes start to wet and being so proud of my grandparents whom I one day will meet in heaven, I cried. Being a young man, I tried so hard to hide it. Young Irish men do not cry, but I did. I closed my eyes and heard my grandfather saying the proposal through the sound of the wind. It circled me. Engulfing me while twirling every blade of the lush green grass in the same way my blood filtered through my veins. The sun shone brighter and brighter by the second. The sound of the ocean grew stronger. The sea smelled stronger as my nostrils flared.

Then I felt him. He was right there beside me putting his arm around my neck, and such a gentle, soft touch it was. It was not a ghost, nor a spirit. It was him. It was really him. Everyone was right. I looked just like him. The two wrinkles in my forehead reflected back at me in the same spots on his. His eyes were the same greyish, blue hue as mine. His smirk that gave way only to one side of his mouth and the way he looked me in the eyes with all attention and care and love in the world was the same I was giving him.





It felt like eternity. It was only a matter of seconds. I dream and hear the words each day I wake up and take my first sips of coffee. I heard him speak. They were not a lot, nor earth shattering, but they were his and that was all that mattered. They were my grandfather's, my blood. Me it was me he had spoken to, after I thought I was going to have to wait a lifetime to finally hear the loving voice I had only heard of.

"I love you, Daniel. You've made me so proud. I'll be waiting."





Coiled Vase *Shayna Polomchak*







Home *Alycia Tassone*

Far away from the comforts of home,
free to wander, free to roam.
Will it be happiness and joy, or struggle and strife?
What should I make of this new life?

It's time to let go, time to fly,
Yet every day I question why.
Why am I here? What do I do?
How will I get through this change without you?

So out of place, scared out of my mind.
Searching for purpose, some hope to find.
Hope for the future, hope for the time
when something will click and it'll all be just fine.

I never imagined all the heartsick nights,
crying after I turned out the lights,
Feeling so helpless, dejected, and sad.
Are the next four years going to feel this bad?

But I can't give up, I can't break down.
I can't let my fears swallow me and drown.
It'll all be fine, it'll all work out.
can't let myself be consumed with doubt.
Somehow I will find a way
to make it through each and every day.
To push ahead through all the tears
and be okay for the next four years.

And when I feel alone and depressed and sad,
I'll just remember all the good times I had.
All the comforts and memories I'll cherish and share,
'Cause home is where the heart is and my heart is there.





“Oh Muses! Guide me on my journey. Lead me through the land of Josephium to the Scroll of Knowledge, the last hope of my family. By the gods of our land, bring me safety and guard my people while I am away. Oh Muses! Guide me on my journey.”

Last spring, my country sent me to find it, The Scroll of All Knowledge. They told me that it was in a far off place, a place known as Josephium. The Scroll is said to have the power to fix my nation, Arundelonia, and bring wealth and security back to our green plains. That is why I brave this place, filled with strange creatures, vile monsters, and gurgling streams of deadly water. Alone, I walk through the fallen leaves of fall, the sunlight glowing on my brow and the wind pulling my dark hair from behind my ears. I am Katharine, a princess to my people, a ruler, and now a savior. I must find this Scroll or else my people will fall into darkness.

The natives of Josephium are strange creatures. The Studencian women have long thick hair that is as green as seaweed and as shimmering as spiderwebs. Their faces are pale, off green, and their eyes are bright gold. They are beautiful things, slight and fair, dancing as they move throughout the Josephium. The most interesting thing about them, though, is that there is a light worn around their necks as a small star. It glows and diminishes darkness all around them, keeping them bright and alive. The men are very different. They have messy hair that sticks up like dark blades of grass. They throw rocks and kick logs back and forth between each other, creating games that just hurt each other as the rocks collide with their heads. Their eyes differ the most. They have thin slits for pupils and some of them, some of them have black eyes instead of gold.

These fairy like people with green skin are the people I walk among. They have not turned against me, for they do not tend to themselves. The Studencians are cared for by the Slugornians. They are great lumbering beasts that look like snails without shells, slimy and mud colored. They are the guardians, they are the ones that when I first arrived, I feared. Now I realize my fear was in vain.

I hid in one of the trees that are scattered through fair Josephium. Below me I saw one of the Studencian women dancing below. Her hair was not simply green but was flecked with sea blue: her eyes were like the golden leaves that hid me. She was stunningly beautiful, and her light shone out its soft light until the entire clearing was filled. While she was dancing, one of the Studencian men with black eyes crept to the edge of the clearing. He watched the light twinkle around him, licking his lips. As if to





to quench his greed, he began pulling black berries off of some of the shadowy bushes. The more he ate the darker he became until his skin no longer looked pale green and his hair no longer like grass. Black, his eyes smoldering, he stepped from behind the shadowy bushes.

The girl beneath me continued twirling around, drunk and giddy with the light of her amulet star. As she danced, he drew closer, blacker with each step. He was not the only one who drew near, though. Other Studencian women, all lacking their amulets, drew near, calling to their dancing friend, crying to her, begging her to hear them. She did not hear them. We all heard her scream as the amulet star was torn from around her neck by the black one, heard his terrifying shrieking laughter as he smashed the light against a rock, destroying it in one movement. It was a double blow, for she was destroyed too.

With her light gone, the beautiful green Studencian fell to the ground, her hair looking withered and limp, her eyes looking murky and large with shock. The black Studencian turned and ran. The other Studencian women faded back into the trees as the Slugornians came oozing onto the scene. I listened to them click and gargle with her for a few moments, and then, while they were distracted, I slipped down from my tree. As I crept away, her screams and cries cut through me like knives.

Night came and went while I pressed deeper into Josephium. A tall building of stone and molded arches stood before me. It was here that I would find the scroll. Approaching one of the towering doors, I felt the eyes of the seemingly living stone needle down into me. I slipped into the musty, dusty halls by the means of a heavy wooden door. No women were in the tall building, for no soft light filled the hallways. Muffled light from grimy windows slanted down the halls, giving them a ghostly appearance. I started forward, climbing slowly the marble stairs. As I reached the top of the stairs a loud bang came from behind me. I jumped and bolted to hide behind some of the curtains. I was not about to get caught.

The Studencian girl whose light was gone came flying up the stairs, her disheveled hair streaming out behind her, her eyes golden pools of tears. Another Studencian woman followed.

"Did the Slugornians not promise to take care of you, Marissica?" the trailing woman asked.





"They did promise, but only after they said it was my own carelessness that shattered...shattered...shattered...." Marissica's voice trailed off into silence. I peeked out through a hole in the curtains. My eyes stung from sudden moisture. She looked shattered.

"I don't think they are really going to help me," her golden eyes changed to a deeper brown and her head drooped. "Even with their help, my light will never come back."

"Let us go see the Scroll." Her friend put her arm around Marissica and led her past me. I could see the vague hope in Marissica's eyes.

After their footsteps faded, I crept from my hiding spot and began to follow the smudges they had left in the dust on the floor. They would lead me right to the scroll. Something nagged at me, though. It felt wrong, taking something else so precious from Marissica. I did not even know her, yet I knew that she needed something valuable left in her life. Perhaps I could just copy the scroll.

As I followed the markings up winding staircases and long deserted hallways, I pondered what would lie ahead. Would there be any obstacles waiting for me in the dimness ahead? I soon found the answer.

I walked through the final corridor and into a room lit by flaming torches. Soot covered the walls and windows so that no natural light shone through. Ahead sat a gray and gold cat, its tail long and sweeping as it curled three times around its body. Its eyes were large and green, piercing to the core all those who came before her. She was looking down when I slipped into the room. Two of the Slugornians were kneeling before her. One asked her, "Great protectress of the Scroll of Knowledge, impart unto me this most ancient of wisdom."

The Great Cat turned its green eyes towards the Slugornians and hissed with its forked tongue, "What is it that you seek from the Scroll?"

"We seek to rule over Josephium with all of the Studentian beneath us, serving us and our purposes," the Slugornians bent low before the Great Cat and keeper of the Scroll. The Cat bowed its head, its eyes closed, and silver smoke came pouring from its nostrils. The smoke swirled around until two ghostly figures appeared. One was a light, bright and pure, the other was a skeletal figure wearing a crown.

"Choose what you will," the forked tongue slithered between the sharp teeth. The





Slugornians looked bewildered, their squinty eyes flickering back and forth between the figures.

“What is this? Is there really any choice?” one of them belched out towards the Great Cat, “We choose the crown.”

“Then you choose death,” the decree came out as a yowl and both Slugornians rose into the air. As they rose, their screams filled the cavernous room as each individual bone in their body was slid out of its place and snapped into by an invisible force. Finally, when every single bone was broken, when their pain was excruciating, their skulls began to crumple, their eyes bulging out until they exploded. I do not know what happened to their bodies, their pain too intense for me to watch. When I looked back, they were gone.

The Great Cat looked up, her great, piercing green eyes fixed upon my figure in the shadows.

“Come forward, Katharine. Ask what you will.” Her tail snaked around her and folded neatly over her talons. My knees shook, but as I walked forward, my family’s faces flashed into my mind. Mother, father, Thames, Josah, and Mattrick, all sad, all hungry, all in need of my success. I calmed my shaking and walked towards those green eyes.

“I wish for the Scroll of Knowledge,” I looked into those eyes, “My family is in desperate need.”

“You seek knowledge itself,” the Great Cat’s voice nearly purred. “Very interesting. Choose wisely.”

Again, the silky gray-gold head bowed, the eyes closed, and the smoke came again. Silvery characters came forth, one held an orb, the other was the same light. What was the orb? What was the light? Could the Great Cat see my intentions were purer than the Slugornians? What would cause the Cat to spare me from that same excruciating death? I squinted at the lights.

Fringed by my lashes, the orb looked like a brain. Knowledge. I opened my mouth to choose the orb when I noticed the light. The light looked like a necklace. Marissica’s necklace. Her sad brown eyes swam before me. Immediately her face collided with that of my families. Who would I have to choose? I felt as if my heart were being torn in two different directions.

In that moment, I realized that even if my family were to die, we would die in





peace. Our security and our status had changed through natural waning and changing tides. Marissica's peace had been taken by force, smashed into a thousand pieces, and tossed aside into the darkness of hopeless pain. I had to choose Marissica.

"The light," though I tried to sound sure, my voice warbled, "I choose the light."

The Great Cat's green eyes looked towards me as though I were prey just out of reach.

"You have chosen through compassion, seen what is needed by those who are not closest to you, and reached out to bring peace to others," the Cat's mouth curved into a smile, "you have chosen life, not just for your family and Marissica but for yourself as well."

The Cat's tail came towards me and rested against my forehead. Knowledge seeped into my mind as the Scroll of Knowledge was imprinted into me. I would not forget and I could save my family. The silk of her tail slipped from my forehead. I opened my eyes.

Floating before me was a light. It was dim, but it was hopeful. Marissica could have some hope now.

"Please give it to her," I said, "My gift should be one of silence."

The Great Cat's smile grew. "Go Now. They will not catch you, you shall walk through them and they shall not see you."

I turned and quickly fled through the tall door. Once I was away from the Cat, I slowed to a walk. Home was so far away, my feet felt like lead at the thought of the journey's length and danger.

The danger, though, seemed to have faded greatly. True to the word of the Cat, no one seemed to see me. No one, that is, except Marissica.

She came dancing across the leaf strewn ground towards me, her light dimly glowing, her eyes shimmering back to gold. When she caught sight of me, she swirled toward my light on the breeze and put her pale green arms around my neck. I closed my eyes and she kissed me lightly on the forehead. When I opened my eyes I was no longer in Josephium. I was home.



Textured Vase *Shayna Polomchak*









Where soft footsteps choose to fall,
echoing through the empty halls,
here love has made a one-time call;
a partner slumbers through them all.

The light gleams,
looking for another to redeem.
From vivid dreams,
little, as they seem.

The gentle beams play
(on the eye-lids of jilted hosts)
where lovers lay,
(where lover's toast)
and stay
(not to boast).
Not to be taken by the day
(of nothing but the most).

(Now gone post haste)
a piece of paper with her name
(in his place).
This one was just the same
(he made his trace).
The love they made was just for fame
(on another pretty face).
Nothing more than just a game.

Morning comes and she awakes.
Another partner, this it makes.
Just a feeling is all it takes
to break the pattern of heartbreaks.















Regina Warfel **Just a Small Part of the Universe**





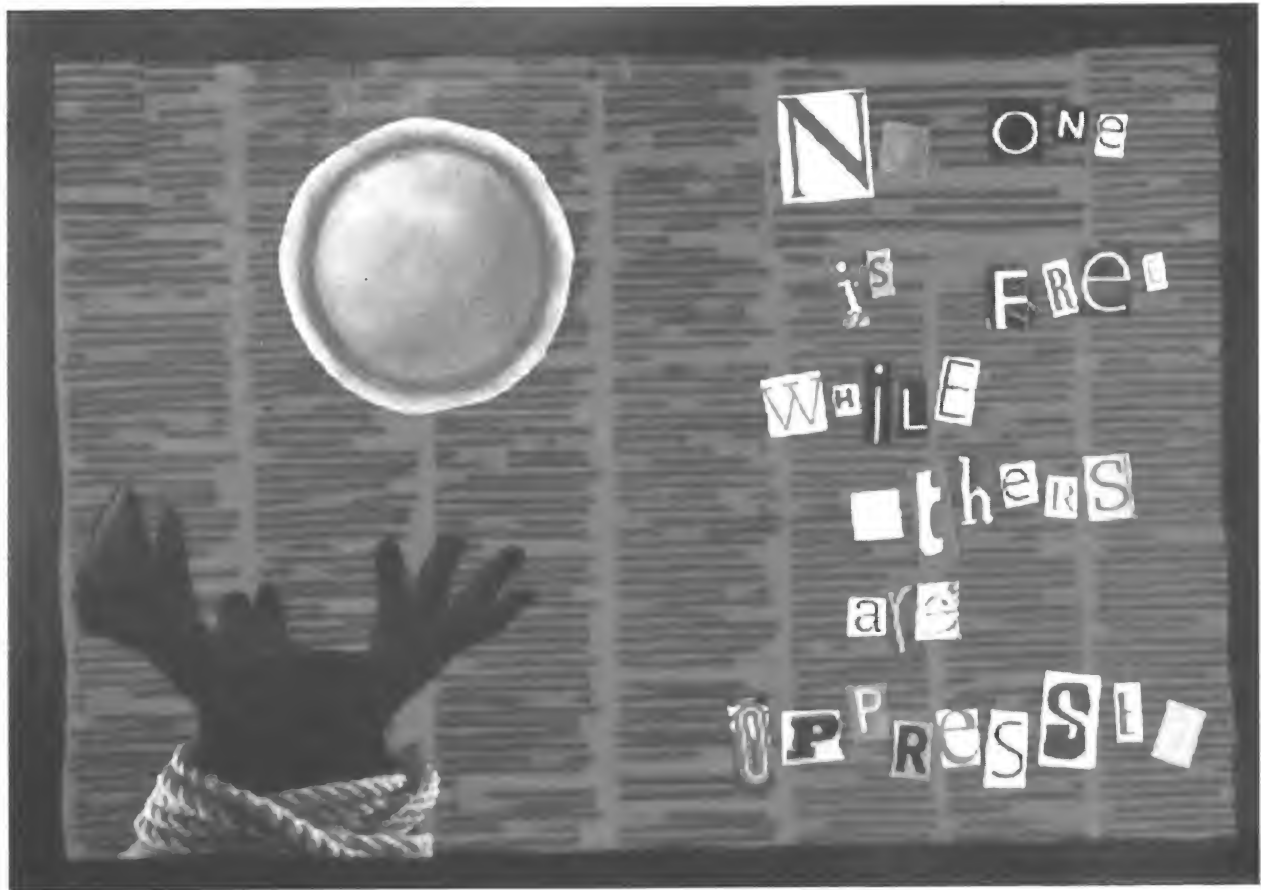






No One is Free While Others Are Oppressed

Melia Paulino





I was thinking about my Grandma the other day. An elderly woman walked past, nodded, and said "Hello, Trish." I don't know why, but something in the way her old, cracked voice announced my nickname, sounded like my Grandma. Whenever I introduce myself to other people, I always tell them my name is Patricia. As a result, almost every one I know calls me "Patricia." Only close friends and dear relatives call me "Trish." Immediately, after hearing my nearly obsolete nickname, I remembered Grandma and thought about all her loving, comforting characteristics.

The name "Isabel Pestow" always brings smiles to people's faces. Perhaps that's because she was always smiling. She looked and acted like the quintessential grandma. She had fine, gray hair which she curled every Friday at the beauty shop. She always kept a tub of ice cream in her freezer whenever she knew the grandkids were coming. She kept a huge calendar in her kitchen that had all our relatives' birthdays written down. On our birthdays, she would call us at lunchtime and sing "Happy Birthday, to you..." in her choppy, old alto soprano voice. It was sad when her mind started to leave her. My mom went over to Grandma's to buy her groceries, and in passing reminded Grandma that it was her birthday. "Oh honey," Grandma trembled. "I'm so sorry. I forgot all about it." My mom was understanding and tried to comfort Grandma, saying it was no big deal. But Grandma shook her head sadly. It was her job to remember everyone's birthday. Now she couldn't even remember her own daughter's.

Grandma was never a stranger to labor. When Mom went to get groceries on Friday, Grandma would empty the trash, empty the ice cube trays and fill them up again, empty the dishwasher, and if she had time, sew the holes in our woven dining room rug. Her specialty was needlework. On our first birthdays, she made us our first crayon box out of plastic canvas and yarn. She sewed buttons on dishrags, made quilts and oven pads, and crocheted hats and mittens. She was especially fond of Christmas decorations. She hand-made all of our stockings. She bought a design and carefully stitched a kid-friendly stocking, complete with ribbons, sequins, and our names. Half of our Christmas ornaments were a result of Grandma's pastime. Once she sold a bunch of homemade ornaments at the beauty shop and made a good forty dollars. She was so happy she treated us all to Taco Bell. Not all of our relatives appreciated Grandma's decoration. My aunts and uncles threw away the homemade Christmas ornaments Grandma made them because they did look like traditional ornaments on a traditional Christmas tree.





They failed to see the dedication and love Grandma was giving them through those ornaments.

Once Grandma became ill with breast cancer, she was never the same. She became a little more surly and grouchy. We always thought Grandma would die from a heart attack. High blood pressure ran through her side of the family. Every single one of her brothers and sisters had a heart attack (though not all of them died from them). Instead, cancer got a hold of her and ate her up from the inside. A slow, painful way to die. She was the last person on earth who deserved a death like hers. Though she was never mean to us kids, she snapped at Mom and Grandpa towards the end. She lost so much weight. She used to be a plump, smiling housewife; right before she left, her skin flapped freely from her arms and legs, not having anything to wrap themselves around. A couple of months before she died, my mom read her a letter from an old friend. The letter recalled how they used to send each other goodies through the mail on a cookie tray. "I don't know why we stopped," the letter read. "But I know who sent the tray last, as I found this dish in my garage the other day." A perfect testimony to Grandma's kindness, as she helplessly lay on the bed, in pain, breathing hard.

She went to heaven on July 6th of my senior year in high school. We had just finished our summer vacation in Georgia. Mom was tired and needed a break from all the responsibilities of running her own household and Grandma's as well. Grandma Pestow waited for us until we got back, so we could be there when she died. At her funeral mass, my Godmother sang the Last Farewell, "May the angels lead you into paradise/ may the martyrs greet you at your arrival/ and lead you into the holy city, Jerusalem." I left the church knowing Grandma deserved nothing less than the company of angels and martyrs.

I often wonder why Grandma had to die so painful a death. I'll never know. I've come to believe stuff happens, and there's not much we can do about it. It was strange watching Grandma devolve from a happy, selfless caretaker to a gruff, helpless terminal patient. It's easy to focus on the grave part of her life which eventually caused her death. But if Grandma were back with us, I know she wouldn't want us to complain. "Put a smile on that face," she would say. So I do. Every Christmas cookie, every dish of ice cream with chocolate chips and butterscotch, every Chili Cheese Burrito from Taco Bell, I remember Grandma.

"Love you, Grandma!" "Love you too, Trish."





"I now pronounce you man and wife," the pastor said, smiling at the couple. The whirl of the airplane was loud in their ears as they prepared to jump. The instructor stepped forward to check the parachutes and the pastor moved aside. He gave the happy couple a thumbs-up as they looked back, and then jumped out of the plane holding hands. Once out of the plane, they fell rapidly and started to cling to each other. When the time came to open the parachutes, they ignored it. He hit the ground first, like a gentleman. Several people rushed over but there was no use.

A few weeks after Sadie became engaged to Logan, the couple was out for a picnic in the local park. Once the meal was over, Sadie sat wistfully gazing out at the people while Logan laid back on the blanket with his hands behind his head. He dozed softly for a few minutes while a breeze ruffled his t-shirt. When he opened his eyes, he saw that Sadie was still in the same position, staring. He sat up and put an arm around her.

"Something wrong?" he asked, anxious to keep his future bride happy.

"Oh, just thinking..." Sadie murmured, not turning to face him. Her brown hair was messy in the wind.

"About what?" Logan persisted. He saw now that she was deeply thinking about something.

"The world," she replied with a sigh. She turned to face him with a strange look in her eyes.

"That's pretty vague."

"The world is a bad place," Sadie said with another sigh.

"Hey, what's wrong with you today? I thought we were having a nice picnic, did I do something?" Logan asked, now worried that he had ruined things somehow.

"No, it's not you. You're the only good thing in this world. That's why I've been thinking... Logan, I think we should get married and then kill ourselves."

"What?! Jesus Sadie, don't scare me like that, that's not a funny joke," Logan said, nervously running his hand through his hair.

"I'm not joking, I really think we should," Sadie replied, taking his hands. Logan quickly jerked them away.

"No! No way! What is wrong with you?" He stared at her in disbelief, with a look of almost terror in his face.





"Ok, ok, calm down. You're the one who asked what I was thinking," she said, looking away again.

"Aw, don't be upset, I just...why would you even think of something like that?"

"Never mind, just forget about it. I won't mention it again," Sadie said, sighing again. The couple returned to normal after a few days. Logan put the incident down to some sort of brief depression of Sadie's, for she was back to her cheerful self soon enough. As promised by Sadie, the incident was not mentioned again for several weeks. Then one day while Sadie was with her friends shopping for a wedding dress, she called Logan.

"Logan? Hello?"

"Hey babe, how is the dress search going?" he replied.

"Oh they're all beautiful. But listen, I've been thinking...I want a skydiving wedding," Sadie said quickly.

"A what? Sadie, you're afraid of heights," Logan replied, confused.

"I know, but I want to feel the rush of life one last time," she said.

"One last time? What do you mean? Sadie, are you okay?" he asked.

"I'm fine," she replied.

"You aren't. What do you mean by one last time?" Logan demanded.

"Oh, just before we're married and have to be serious," she said.

"Sadie, getting married isn't the end of our lives. Listen, if it bothers you that much, I guess we don't have to get married," Logan said, hurt.

"No, I love you! I just know that once we're married nothing will be the same."

"Then we shouldn't get married if you feel that way," he said seriously.

"No, we must get married. But while skydiving," Sadie said.

"That's seems pretty dangerous..."

"The danger is the best part! The thrill of not knowing what could happen! That's life!" she cried.

"God, I don't know, I'll think about it ok? I'll see you later," he said.

"Fine, but think hard ok?" Logan hung up and stared at the ceiling for a moment. Sadie was acting strangely, but he couldn't figure out why. He decided to confront her when she got home.

"Logan, I'm here!" Sadie called cheerfully when she came in through the door. She was carrying shopping bags. Her hair was newly cropped short after she had worn it





long most of her life. She poked her head around the corner into the living room and Logan quickly got up to greet her.

"Your hair...it's...gone..." he stuttered.

"Oh, yeah. I just felt like a change. My hair was weighing me down," she said airily. "Do you like it?"

"Yeah, I...it's nice. I'm just shocked. But you look good, as always," he said with a smile. After getting over his surprise at her new look, he led her by the hand to sit down with him.

"Sadie, we have to talk about something," he said quietly.

"What's wrong?" she said, suddenly alarmed.

"It's you. You've been acting so different lately and I'm really worried about you. You wanted us to commit suicide, this thing with a skydiving wedding, and now you cut your hair suddenly. What's wrong with you?" he said. Sadie's eyes started to fill with tears.

"You can tell me," he said gently, squeezing her hand.

"I've been thinking a lot since we got engaged. I love you so much and I'm terrified of losing that love. We're happy now but I'm afraid that once we're married, real life will make us fall out of love. And I couldn't stand it if that happened. That's why I want us to die. I don't want to die now but I want to die happy and I know that if I was with you when I did, I would be happy. I thought the skydiving wedding would be a good way to make it look like an accident because no one else would understand," Sadie said tearfully. After she finished, Logan dropped her hand and stood up quickly in horror.

"What are you saying?" he cried.

"Logan, please, try to understand!"

"No, I can't even think about that. I have to be alone, I'm sorry," he said, heading for the door.

"No! Don't go!" she called. But he ignored her pleading and left. Sadie sat on the couch crying and pulling at her hair.

"I've ruined everything," she repeated to herself.

Several hours later, Logan snuck back into the house. It was late at night, and Sadie had fallen asleep on the couch.

"Sadie!" he whispered in the darkness. "Are you asleep?"

"Not anymore," she whispered back. There was a moment of silence.





“No,” he replied.

“Are you going to turn on the light?”

“No.” Logan felt his way carefully to the couch and sat down. He put his arm around Sadie in the shadows.

“I could never hate you. Listen, I thought a lot about what you said. I’m sorry I ran out on you, but I was never expecting you to say what you did. At first I was frightened because I never wanted to think about you dying, but now I think I understand what you’re saying. I would never forgive myself if I fell out of love with you, and I don’t want to have regrets like that when I’m old. I can’t say I’m one hundred percent behind the idea yet, but I’m willing to let you convince me,” he said.

“Oh Logan!” Sadie said, throwing her arms around him. “I didn’t want to tell you because I didn’t think you would understand. Thank you.”

The day of the wedding Logan was nervous. He shifted his weight from foot to foot and couldn’t keep his hands still. Everyone he spoke to smiled at him and told him his nerves would go away once the ceremony started. The bridal party and guests gathered around the runway to watch the plane take off carrying the skydiving couple. They sat in a designated area to welcome the newlyweds when they landed and watched for the parachutes to come floating down.

In the plane, the pastor completed the ceremony. Sadie squeezed Logan’s hands tightly as they jumped out of the plane together. The rush of air took their breath away at first, and the sensation of falling was intoxicating. As the ground grew closer, Logan took Sadie in his arms. They should have opened their parachutes long ago but they held each other blissfully as if they were unaware of the earth coming up to meet them. Just before they hit, Sadie gasped sharply in anticipation and Logan collided with the ground first.





Patricia Roeder **Quetzalcoatl**

The big blue serpent God,
chills in his Home.
Receives a gift from devils,
who give a gift unknown.
He sees himself in his reflection,
he thinks he's a man.
He leaves but not on Ce Acatl,
he'll be back when he can.

Andrew Pyzdrowski **A Step Back**

I am broken. I've lost my faith.
I see the world with such disgrace.
Why do the good suffer
When the bad prosper?
When did religion become so violent?
"Love thy neighbor" "benevolent"?
What happened to these virtues that once were held so strong?
When did being different meant being wrong?
Those who claim to be doing good will attack
Things that are misunderstood.
Lost in translation; a disease corrupting the world's mind.
And if you approach one about faults in beliefs, then you should hide.
Harsh words reign down on those who do no harm,
Children have diseases, and thousands homeless and starved.
People refuse to help, refuse to donate, refuse to acknowledge.
But what if it were you on the other side of life's hedge?



Hope Fades *Ginger Snow*



In the depths of my heart doth wait
a tiny piece of what once was.
The hope for love undying, true,
the longing for someone so much that it consumes
The need so intense it fills your soul.
How much pain and loneliness can one stand?
Emptiness so deep it could fill the universe.
I long for your touch.
I want to feel your warmth for eternity
but it isn't what you want.
Hope fades.
That love doesn't exist.

Stress *Kelsey Reynolds*

Why must I continually tolerate this abuse?
My mind spins in circles from what is so perplexing.
Humor me please?
Petty thoughts, petty words.
You'd think I would have snapped by now.
It's almost like a tension and pressure a balloon feels,
as it is about to pop.
But it can never get past that flexible moment.
Never experience that complete relief.
Holding you back.
Restraining you,
watching you struggle, like a fish out of water.
Change...
You finally see that chance at appeasement.
You grab it and pull.
Now.
Nothingness...





The drag queen's name was Ophelia Cox,
And she nervously twisted her blond weave's locks,
As she clung to the wall, one foot pressed against,
And observed the group, their nervousness she sensed,
To be in a room with such a strange person.
And the longer she stared, the mood was to worsen.
Therefore, with a sigh and a flip of her hair,
She spoke in a light, airy voice without care,
And began her tale, though she dreaded to talk,
While trying to ignore the collective gawk.
"I used to be," she began, "a charming young boy,
Yet at home, I never played with typical toys.
Instead I loved makeup and shiny high heels.
When I got excited, I voiced it in squeals.
However, my parents became quite ashamed,
And began to call me 'That boy...' instead of my name.
When I reached sixteen, it seemed time to roam,
So I packed up my bags, and I left my home.
I slept on the street, not sure what to do,
Until someone appeared to suggest something new.
His name was Ricardo and we were the same,
He taught me that dressing up should not bring me shame.
He brought me to a place where I saw so much glitter,
I became excited, my heart was a twitter.
These people understood, these people cared.
They dressed how they liked, they flaunted it, they dared.
This was the beginning of my life dressed in drag,
And I was successful; I don't mean to brag.
Ricardo, my lover, stood by my side,
And for once, my young heart was swollen with pride.
However, one day, Ricardo looked sad,
So I joked, asking him 'Now, what can be THAT bad?'





He sighed and he spoke, a tear in his eye,
'Ophelia, I have AIDS, and I'm going to die.'
I was shocked and distressed, for as you know,
When one lover has AIDS, the other, too, must go.
I stood by his side 'til the last fateful years,
Trying my best to go on with out fear.
Yet when Ricardo, a prime age of twenty,
Died, my fear was increased, by plenty.
Where should I go? What should I be?
Then, like a flash, it banged into me.





The Bird Died: A Parable in One Act *John Groppe*

This is it, Henry, the entrance to our future. Down and dirty as they say in poker. I see you brought the bird along. I don't understand it, but if it makes you feel good to have your little buddy with you, I guess that's okay. But you know a mine is no place for a canary.

In this instance, George, he's not a pal or a pet. He's a partner.

Woah. I'm not sure we can afford to cut this three ways. How much does he want?

I'm serious, George. As I have told you again and again, he can let us know if something does not seem quite right. You refuse to listen.

He's going to look a lot worse than we will when we come up. I've warned you. We can take a shower, maybe even throw our dirty clothes away. He'll be a strange looking canary when we come back up. One more time, a mine is no place for a bird. It's not much of a place for men like you and me, but a canary—out of the question.

He's coming with me, George. I don't think you know everything.

Okay, here's where wealth begins. Hop in the cage. We're going down – waaay down, but actually we're going to rise in fortune, in prominence, even in power—well, maybe a little—but money, man, we'll have it made.

Is that thing safe, George? It looks rusty.

Rusty hell! It has been used for years without a problem. What's a little rust? You look a little rusty yourself.

I just don't know about this mining business. It sounds good when you tell it, but it also sounds...

Here we go. Hold on. Sounds what?

Well, risky for one. Have you really thought it all through? Do we have to go this fast? This thing makes a helluva noise.

What's to think? We get in, make some quick bucks, sell this place, and then take it easy. Brace yourself. We're almost at the bottom.

Thank God. How do they do this everyday? Do they ever get used to it?

If the money's good, you can get used to anything. Say, pal, your bird doesn't look too good. That ride shake him up? I don't why you wanted to bring your pet down here. Yeah, don't start into it again. I know what you told me, but I don't get it. Looks like you'll need a new birdcage the way he's pooped all over the bottom there. I told you he wasn't meant for this stuff. From here on in we walk.





How far is it?

It's hard to tell. These tunnels turn and twist. We'll find it. I've got this map. Let's move along.

The ground's pretty rough. These helmet lamps don't light up much.

Henry, you're always looking at the negatives. You gotta think more positively. Look at the bright side.

And I can't walk too fast with the bird. The cage is awkward.

I coulda told you that but you had to bring it. That bird's going to be the death of me.

Just the opposite, George, if you'd only listen for once. Why did that guy get rid of this place so quick? If it's as good as you say it is, why did he sell?

In fast, out fast. That's the name of the business. This isn't easy work, quite dirty in fact, so if you can make a quick killing, bingo, you can go on to something where you don't end up looking like a mole.

We've gone a long a way. How much more, George?

If this map is accurate, that mother lode can't be far. It's beginning to smell like money in here.

Are you sure the map is accurate? And are these alleys marked so that we can find our way back?

Maybe you shoulda been dropping some canary seed along the way to mark the trail, like Hansel and Gretel. Yeah, we'll find our way back, but damn it, Henry, don't be so skeptical all the time. He told us it was deep, and we are deeeep, man. And he said it was fairly far in. Look, there's no easy way to make money. This stuff is not lying around on the surface so you can just walk around and pick it up. You can't get rich that way.

Well, George, now that I'm here—deep down and far in—I'm not so sure I like it. Why do we have to be rich? We were doing okay the way we were.

You lack imagination, among other things. You'll see what a difference it makes to be rich, and you won't regret we played mole for a while.


Maybe...maybe not.

It seems far in because we're going so slow. Can you goose it a little?

George, I am going as fast as I can carrying the birdcage.

Bird cage, bird cage. You had to bring the bird. I don't know about you sometimes...





bringing a bird down into a mine. I indulged you, so I guess I'm partly to blame. Hey, listen... the sound is different, and the smell. What is that smell anyway? It's awful and getting worse--pheew.

It's sulfur, George. There is a lot of sulfur in this stuff. Didn't he tell you about the sulfur?

Maybe he mentioned it. I can't recall. What do you with sulfur?
For one thing, it can produce sulfuric acid.

Bingo, how about that! That's a bonus. We score twice. We get the coal and the sulfur in the bargain. But this gives us a chance to be big heroes.

How's that, George?

Well, we could whip up a big batch of sulfuric acid, and then get folks to bring their garbage to us—for a small fee, of course—and we puree their junk in the acid and save a few landfills. Neat, eh Henry? We'll be giants to a lot of people—green giants—rich, jolly green giants.

Okay, smart guy, what do we do with all that puree? Got any ideas?

How did I get hooked up with you? Sure I got ideas. We could sell the stuff, and even make a second killing.

Sell it? Come on, who would buy it?

I dunno... the Nigerians maybe. Nigerians buy anything. Russians, who knows? The Ruskies are harder to work with, but those Nigerians are wheeler-dealers. They're our best shot. We sell it to them... bargain a little about the price. We've already made money out of it, so we don't have to be too hard nosed, but we do need push the Nigerians a little. Then they'll turn around, repackage the goop, give it a new name and sell it to other Africans and the stuff starts going back and forth around the globe and the price goes up each time. Some of it will make its way back to the good old US of A and a some dumb American will buy it for what you would pay for diamonds and he could have had it from us for a fraction of that.

George, you don't seem to realize that our puree will be toxic. Got it—toxic?

Of course it will be toxic. Everything is toxic. Do you think things are made out Kleenex—all white and soft and pure? Even Kleenex are toxic. How do you think it got that white and soft? Chemicals, Henry, chemicals. You know those throwaway diapers mothers put on their babies' behinds? Henry, I tell you those things are toxic and with



tender loving care, mothers wrap their babies' rumps up in those toxic things and sing and coo to the babies while they do it and the toxic stuff keeps all that other stuff from leaking out. Progress, what?

George, do you understand what toxic means. Poison, disfigurement, death.

Yeah, I understand toxic. Humans invented toxic. Why? We were loosing out to saber toothed tigers and such. They had the edge. Bingo, we invented toxic stuff—bronze, iron, steel, bullets, a-bombs, and it worked. How many saber teeth did you see up top? None... that's N-O-N-E. Toxins beat them, Henry.

Just a minute, George.

Just a minute nothing. Can you dissolve all those obsolete TVs and cell phones and babies' diapers and whatnot with baby shampoo? They gotta go somewhere. Dissolve them. Bingo, problem solved.

So, we're going to sell toxic waste to Africans—is that it?

You're damn right and that's called free enterprise, the free market.

George, there are rules.

Rules hell. Games have rules. You play so many minutes. You stay within certain boundaries. This is business. There are no rules. That's what free in free enterprise means.

Okay, so maybe we sell some toxic stuff to Nigerians and maybe have some left over and we sell some of that to the Russians and, since we'll no doubt have a lot of this stuff, we probably will have some left over. Then what do we do?

Henry, you amaze me. You can spend so much time caring about birds—now, don't get me wrong, I think they're cute but nobody got rich on birds except for Colonel Sanders. Talk about toxic, what do you think is in his recipe? If we have some goop left over, look around. All these empty caverns, and where do they go? Downhill to nowhere. We pour whatever is left down one of these old mine shafts.

Damn it, George, we'll poison the earth!

No, Henry, we will put the stuff back where it came from in the first place. Nature produced it. Nature will take care of it.

It does not work that way, George. Okay, maybe nature can do that given enough time but how much time do we have—you, me, this bird?

Always the bird! Give me a break on the bird, but still, neither one of us will be





around for long anyway but long enough is good enough for me. If we can live well long enough and outlive your damn bird in the bargain, what's wrong with that?

I don't know, George.

Look, Henry, I know you've got a soft spot and that's why you need somebody like me to look after you, to take the risks you won't take, to do some things that you won't do so that you can be safe, so that we all can be safe. You are opposed to torture—right? Who isn't, but without torturing those who want to hurt us—birds and all—we don't learn what we need to know to protect ourselves, how are we going to protect ourselves? So you and other softies are safe but just don't ask any questions. You want to be comfortable so you can spend time with your birds. We'll be comfortable. Don't ask any questions. What I know is that we're wasting time. Let's go find the stuff we came here for and stop wasting time. It can't be far. Pick up the cage and let's move on.

George...

What now?

The bird died.

Jeez! Shake the cage. I told you he couldn't take it.

It's dead, George. I do not have to shake the cage. He's dead.

What do you want—that we should have a moment of silence, that we should stop now when we're so close? We're almost there.

We should go back. It's not safe. That's what the bird's death means.

Birds die all the time, Henry. We don't stop what we're doing when birds die or cats die or trees die.

This is a special case. Since the bird died, so might we.

Everything dies, Henry. When something dies, we don't give up what we are on the verge of accomplishing. Okay, I'll give your bird a moment of silence and I promise to buy you all the birds you want when we make our killing here. Hell, I'll even take you to the Canary Islands for as long as you like but let's get on with what we came for.

George....

What now?

I'm going back. I'll be up top in the air.

Well, I'm not. Go ahead. Wuss out on me. Take your bird. Bury it. Do whatever you need to do. I just want to see what we really have here.





See you, George.

Okay, Henry, I'll see you later. I may need some help at some point. I don't think I can do all this alone. Where's that diagram? God, it's dark with only one light. Henry moved fast. I don't hear him any more, him and his bird—dead bird I should say. Okay, down this shaft.

Damn, there's a lot of debris on the floor—some tools even. I guess when they hit it big, they left in hurry and didn't need them anymore.

Jeez, it's chilly—chillier than it was.

I don't feel so good. I ate too fast or whatever.

Maybe he's not too far and can come back. Henry! H-E-N-R-Y. Stupid echo. I'll rest for a second, sit here by the wall. This has all been a bit too much. Just a minute, no longer. It's getting late.

H-E-N-R-Y...H-E-N....





Dan Zimmer **The War on War**

Equilibrium.
Eliminate emotions.
Eliminate war.

Create global peace,
that is the Ultimate goal.
No morals or code.

Individuals start
war! sirens, gunfire, and bombs.
Human race will end.

You're young, mindless
how can you do this to yourself?
Stand up for emotions.

You cannot end love.
Hierarchy and order...Dumb!
They shall not stop me.

I will fight this war,
the blind can call me evil, but
know this as false life.



Humans vs. Zombies: The Professor's Journal *Jean Monfort*



Everything written here is true. I write as one of the last survivors. I don't know when they will catch me – I only know that they will catch me, be it today or tomorrow.

Day 1: Little enemy activity. Lots of humans walking around, confident with their guns and socks. I wonder – how many of them will survive the night, when the walking dead go on the hunt? No targets sighted as I walk about campus. None while teaching. Thank goodness the Core building is a spot of sanctuary.

We got our orders – retrieve three black boxes scattered all over campus for the scientist to use in developing a cure. There are a great many of us. The air is electric with excitement and bravado. Humans compare their weaponry and break into small squads. No one is playing the hero tonight. It's about teamwork.


Weather: good – surprisingly balmy for late October. Visibility: Perfect. Kills: 0 – never got close to a single zombie. From what we heard they were all eliminated quickly. Losses: 0 – squad moved well, stuck together. Mission: Accomplished – all 3 boxes returned to base

Day 2: Word reaches me that one of our squad got tagged that morning. I used zombies to teach exponential growth to my Core I students a couple of weeks ago. This is how it begins, I remember saying. They only need to tag one or two to start the climb. Still, I feel a sense of loss, knowing that I will have to peg that guy in the head later. Stupid zombies.

Classes – I have one in my room. Says he'll be gunning for me. Right, except that I'm the one with the actual Nerf gun. All he has are his hands and dodging capabilities. Still, looking around, I cannot help but notice there are more zombies. I look out my window during writing section, and see two facing off. Luckily, the human had his socks ready, and the zombie went on its way, stunned.

Our orders: retrieve original three zombies. Each original zombie has to be hit 10 times – 11 to stun them. There are more zombies now, moving through the silhouetted trees in the grotto, snaking around the Core building. Noodlers are prowling, tanks are confidently charging into groups, knowing that they'll get at least one new zombie before they're taken out. We head out, mindful that before the mission, another of our





original squad got tagged. That makes three known targets targeting us. It's tricky, managing caution and excitement. Shouts all over campus tell us where the fights are, screams when another group is ambushed. We scatter, we regroup, we sprint, we fall back. And for the longest time, nothing. No zombies, no noise, save for the cold wind on the Saint Joseph's College campus. Finally, I hear it – they've flushed one out of hiding. She's running through the back of the grotto. Squad moves to intercept. She zigzags like a sidewinder, tagging a third member before I land the 11th shot. There are cheers as we lead her back to base.

"No melee!"

"NO PROBLEM!"

"No melee!"

"NO PROBLEM!"

But a third zombie has been created from our group. Their numbers grow while ours shrink. As the night progresses, our progress shrinks as well. We are the only group to have located and captured an original zombie. The other two are hiding, or protected by the horde. We walk two perimeters around campus, cutting by Halleck.

Then it happens.

I call contact – shapes by the Core building. Several of them. We start to retreat to the Noll doors, which turns into a sprint once we realize that the several has grown to over a dozen sprinting zombies. We reach the safety zone. There are perhaps ten of us. Ten. Some humans have retreated to other dorms to get warm for a while. Gossip tells us we are some of the last still outside.

The last humans. We will not leave the safety zone, they cannot attack us. It's a stalemate, and it starts to grate the nerves of the go-getters. They want a final assault. They want to charge. Me? I want to survive this and get home. I convince them to wait. No point in dying needlessly, when we need every Nerf dart we can get. The zombies lose interest, and go hunting for new prey. We make it through Noll, sprint to the apartment safe zones, and work our way back to our home base at Justin to formulate a plan.

Socks are modified into frag grenades. It's a start.

Higher-ups call a welcome cease fire.

I am gone tomorrow—Thursday will be the day of reckoning. My thoughts and





prayers go out to the surviving humans. Stealth will be the key on the next one.

Weather: Cold and windy (my recovery from head cold paused)

Visibility: Again, perfect. There was a large three-quarter moon low on the horizon.

Kills: 2 – 4 – difficult to tell in the scuffle.

Losses: 3 – 5: a hard night. I told them to stay close – no blazes of glory, no hot-headed sprints! They disappeared into the night on frantic hunts, never to return.

Mission: Incomplete – we managed to return 1 of 3 original zombies.

Day 3: It's quiet indoors. Outside is another story. I see them, winging their way around the Core building in pairs now. They're getting smarter about it. If only they weren't so fast. A student tells me there is a posse after me. They're going to start staking out the buildings, waiting for me. Inside I feel the edges of fear like the crackled edges of a burned photograph. Luckily for me, I have age and experience on them. It's how I survived to this point. They will try to get me. I will try and not be caught. Survive the cat and mouse game and see it through to the end. I am now grateful I attended that counter-surveillance course at the Embassy.


Rumors are easier to find than fact, and around campus rumors abound. There are no more humans. There are only a few humans. Tonight everyone dies.

Except for me. Tonight I escape north, to the metropolis.

My friends there admire the weaponry in my backseat, take note of the armband I tuck in my bag. They have no idea what it's like down here, in the midst of it. My mind drifts occasionally south, and wonders how they're handling the rescue operation. Will they save the scientist? How many will get tagged? I push the questions from my mind at the prospect of karaoke. Ah, music – a moment of reprieve amid the tagging and shooting of this apocalypse. The drive back is long, and I know tomorrow it will only be harder. Weather: Wind turned things cold today
Other stats: Unknown. I can only pray for the best.

Day 4: Learned of last night's successful mission. Scientist retrieved. Amazon squad (volleyball team) all but gone. Only one remains now. They were picked off in science by a few clever tag-teaming zombies. Pity. I wonder how the survivor will feel, zeroing in on her former teammates.





In class, I realize I left my book in the car. I share as much with my students. A zombie looks up at me and smiles a stalker smile.

"Why don't you go and get it?" he asks. I know better. I borrow the book from another professor.

Freshmen seminar is in the Science building. I have to run from Core to Science, then back for my Core writing section. Adrenaline is my crutch as I slide from my heels and into some flats – easier maneuverability. Luckily, I am not spotted. There is now a zombie in my freshmen seminar class as well. He looks at me, calculating. He too tells me about my eventual demise. I can only laugh at this point – I've been hearing about my own death so often now it pushes it further into the future. I guess it will happen. But not 'till I've plugged a few undead.


The human base is empty. There are five of us. We learn the horde is on its way. The first part of the mission: clean out the IM field of zombies. We balk – five humans?! Versus....a gathering crowd of shadows in the field? Madness. We stand on the steps of Justin, stoic, listening to the cat calls. Three more humans show up, making the odds a nice 2:1. We charge. They charge.

It's a foamstorm of bullets. I tag my two zombies, then retreat to the base for a moment. As I touch concrete, two hands touch me. Too close, that time, I think. Too close for comfort – I escaped zombification by one step. Still, the fight ends after some more flurry. We are victorious! And not one human died on the field – a small miracle.

Five minutes later, we start the second half of the mission; escorting the scientist to the zombie zone. Going no faster than a walk, we must get her inside the rec center. We are a small group, and agree on a basic strategy – keep to the outsides of the campus. Make it harder to flank us. We take off, painfully slow. Through the darkened grotto, where the leaves are loud and we cannot help but give ourselves away, and across the street we walk to the field outside of Schwietermann Hall. Zombies move ahead of us by the post office. I call contact on another three at our backs. We press on, unmo-lested.

By the chapel we get one. By the Science building they start to close in, sporadic. They are faceless, dark shapes hopping behind one tree, then the next. We press onward through the pines which run along the road by the tennis courts. We are now surrounded, as we have to press to the rec center. Zombies circle around us like





coyotes, wary of our guns but hungry to tag themselves a brain crock pot. They dart in, we hit them, they move on. We taunt each other but we never stop moving. At last we find an unlocked door and get the scientist inside.

Our cheers are loud. Humans victorious! It's an example of teamwork and strategy paying off against terrible odds. We are alive.

Alive to the end – tomorrow is the last day. The final extraction. Will I live to see my family again? Or will my bandana make that climb from arm to forehead?

Day 5: I am told from a student that there was an ambush prepared for me that morning, but I missed it. I replied that I decided to come in earlier than usual. I know my enemy. The one thing no college student will do is wake up earlier than necessary, be they human or zombie.

I have my Nerf Raider CS-35 sitting on my office chair now. It feels good to see it there. My nerves are starting to fray. I keep seeing yellow bandanas in my periphery. I fear my sprint to my car even though it has a ten-foot safety zone around it. I keep looking at trees and bushes and wondering if they're safe. This is the psychology of it all taking its toll. Not to mention the grading I must do, the late nights and early mornings – it's piling up.

But if I survive tonight, if I make it to the end....no, I cannot hope for that. Thinking too much of my potential survival will make me sloppy. I've lost so many of my squad now, it feels wrong to feel hopeful for my own success. Then again, – survival is the goal....

Tonight will decide everything.

I leave this to you, whoever finds these few pages. Remember me, and remember that I stood up against the zombie apocalypse. One of the humans, with a brain in her head and not in her stomach.

No Melee. No Problem.

- The Professor



Olivia Markwalder **Keeping Peace**